

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 21, 2009

S. 581

The Military Family Nutrition Protection Act of 2009

Dear Colleague:

There is a problem in our current child nutrition program laws that punishes the families of our nation's bravest—our combat soldiers. We urge you to support our bipartisan bill that protects military families from being cut out of critical child and maternal nutrition programs simply because a member of the family receives combat pay. The Military Family Nutrition Protection Act of 2009 (S.581) – which I recently introduced with fellow Agriculture Committee cosponsors Senators Bob Casey and Mike Johanns along with cosponsors Senators Bernie Sanders and Susan Collins – would exempt combat pay from income requirements used to determine eligibility for child nutrition programs and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC).

S.581 will protect military families' access to crucial nutrition programs when a family member is overseas and improve consistency across federal food assistance programs.

When a loved one is sent into harms way and a family begins receiving combat pay, family members may have to forfeit access to important nutrition benefits. Despite a precedent for exempting combat pay in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)/food stamp program, child nutrition programs and the WIC program still include combat pay in a family's income level when determining eligibility.

S.581 ensures that families of military personnel serving in Iraq, Afghanistan, and other combat zones are not unfairly cut out of child nutrition assistance by specifying that combat zone pay is excluded from eligibility determinations for all child nutrition programs, including WIC, School Lunch and School Breakfast programs, as well as day care, summer and outside-of-school programs.

These nutrition programs protect families' and children's health and should not be forfeited when a loved one is sent overseas. Eliminating this glaring loophole in current food assistance programs, honors the sacrifice of our service members in combat and improves consistency across federal nutrition programs. If you would like to cosponsor this legislation, please contact Katharine Ferguson in my office at 8-5422 (Katharine_Ferguson@Bennet.senate.gov) or T.J. Birkel in Senator Johanns office at 4-4785 (TJ_Birkel@Johanns.senate.gov).

Sincerely,


Senator Michael Bennet


Senator Michael Johanns


Senator Robert Casey


Senator Bernard Sanders


Senator Susan Collins